

AIR COURIER

PRIORITY

(Security Classification)

## FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy MANAGUA

416

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

February 11, 1957

REF : A-98, January 1, 1957

Review of this document by CIA has determined that

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SUBJECT: Prospects for Political Stability in Nicaragua--information for NIE 80-57

The answer to the 3 compound questions posed in Department's A-98 are set forth in this Despatch. Except when indicated otherwise, they represent views acceptable to Military Attaché, Political Officer and the Chargé.

INTRODUCTION

In the first place there is no disagreement on the good prospects for stability in Nicaragua during the next 4 to 6 months. The diversity of views which does arise involves different evaluations, or different emphasis given to certain factors, of the current situation which affect the speculation on developments during the next 2, 6 or 12 years. They also involve different opinions on the nature and possible significance of certain current trends which can only be properly evaluated later. In particular, one officer believes that President Luis and the National Liberal Party have a true popularity represented by the measure of the vote. Another officer feels that from long usage and from lack of education, the mass of the Nicaraguan population does not feel it expedient to vote against any Government in power for fear of some form of retaliation. He therefore feels that any count of vote does not express the real opinion of the majority of the people at this time. Proceeding from this basis, he feels that many people in the country consider that the only way to get any party out of power is through violence propagated by an opposition. Another officer feels that the very name of Conservative is a handicap and that the Conservative Party groups face an almost impossible task in endeavoring to build up any really satisfactory strength in the country. Consequently, he feels that a minimum of 12 years and possibly much more is necessary.

1. National Liberal Party Leadership. There is clear evidence that President Luis SOMOZA is definitely and effectively the head of the National Liberal Party, at present. Dr. Oscar SEVILLA SACASA, Ambassador Guillermo SEVILLA SACASA and Dr. Luis Manuel DEBAYLE in particular, and other high-ranking members of the Party in charge will do what President Luis wishes. However, there is doubt in the mind of one officer that President Luis will be allowed by the other leaders of his party to go so far with his own ideas as to weaken the "iron hand" heretofore utilized to keep the National Liberal Party in power. In other words this officer feels that President Luis may well find it impossible to carry out some projects which would otherwise be desirable in order to liberalize the tight control maintained by the Party over the country.

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We foresee no serious cleavages within the party arising out of the termination of the trials or from the elections. As a matter of fact the election results should materially strengthen the position of the President as Head of the Party for the next month or so. Certain cleavages will develop as various leading politicians in the Liberal Party begin to work actively toward establishing a position which would permit one of them to succeed President Luis. These cleavages are not apt to become serious unless President Luis fails to carry out his intention of specifically selecting and grooming someone to take his place.

It is highly unlikely that any serious divergence of opinion will develop within the Party over policy. It is also unlikely that any serious difference will develop over division of the spoils which in effect were determined to a large degree in advance of the election. The differences of opinion which might arise will be attributable to the individual desires for personal advancement--particularly to the wishes to those self-appointed candidates--and to different views on political tactics. We do not see that these cleavages will develop to a serious degree within the next year.

The President states that the policies of his father and particularly those set forth in the Party platform (Embdes 176, Oct. 9, 1956) will prevail and be carried out by himself and the National Liberal Party. None of these policies will tend to weaken the so-called "Iron hand." The only major item President Luis intends adding to this program is that he is going to seek Human Rights Legislation. He feels that he will have no trouble implementing this decision. The Ambassador and the Counselor and Political Officer concur in this view. It is in this area, however, that there is a distinct possibility that such legislation can be a threat to the close control of the country exercised by the Party.

The danger arising from less favorable economic conditions cannot now arise until the prospects for next season's harvest become more clear next fall. The danger represents a threat not so much to the leadership within the National Liberal Party as it does to the maintenance by the Party of its predominant position in the country. The effect will be noticeable in terms of dissatisfaction with the National Liberal Party and in the development of some mass support for the opposition. The reaction of the National Guard leaders to a resurgence of Conservative strength, if it should develop, will be an important question.

With reference to the National Guard, it is pertinent to note that some 27 high-ranking officers are scheduled for retirement, due to age or length of service, during the current calendar year and that 32 are due for retirement during 1958. Thus, for the first time in some years, there are major opportunities for many junior Guard officers to advance in rank, responsibility and power. The individuals selected for promotion and the manner of handling this problem is obviously of considerable importance to the later attitude and development of the National Guard, as well as to the nature of the influence it will exercise on Nicaraguan politics.

2. Old and New Conservative Parties. President Luis feels that General Emiliano CHAMORRO is still the undisputed leader of the old Conservative Party.

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He also feels that General Chamorro and he alone will determine when the two Conservative groups get together and the basis on which the amalgamation might take place. The Embassy officials, with the exception of the Military Attaché, share this belief. The Military Attaché feels that General Chamorro has already become merely a symbol and that the young Conservatives both of the old and the new party have effective control now and will consult the General only as a pro forma courtesy but will not follow his lead if his ideas differ from theirs. The real leaders of the Nicaraguan Party, i.e. of the new group are: Eduardo Conrado VADO, Secretary-General of the Party and Dr. Hernaldo ZUNIGA Padilla, President of the Party [for biographic data see Embassy Despatch 377, January 22]. President Luis Somoza considers that Edmundo AMADOR Pineda, the Presidential candidate of the Nicaraguan Conservative Party is too honest and frank a man to be an effective, long-term leader.

While there is some question pending the final election results whether the new Conservative Party received a sufficient percentage of the vote to continue its status as a legal party, the group will nevertheless have its representatives in Congress. One competent political observer considers that if the Nicaraguan Conservative presidential candidate Amador and his group continue as an effective party, the Chamorro Conservatives will move in and take charge of the new group. The upshot of this may be that some person such as José SOLÓRZANO would be selected as a Presidential candidate and possible Party leader.

The objectives of the Nicaraguan Conservative Party according to the statements of its Presidential candidate Amador are to start from the present situation, to build up an effective consolidated Conservative political party to reconcile the differences between the old and new Conservative Parties and to endeavor to acquire a position where the party can effectively challenge the Liberal Party in the next elections which are scheduled to occur in February 1963 (Embdes 386, Jan. 25). The Nicaraguan Conservative Party proposes supporting President Luis in Congress and through the press on all measures considered good for the country. It proposes challenging him and the National Liberal Party in the same manner when the new Conservatives feel that a proposed action is wrong. How this policy works out in practice will become apparent only after Congress begins its sessions.

The Military Attaché believes that the Conservatives cannot become a real threat politically to the National Liberal control of the country in less than something like 12 years. He believes that even such a threat could be developed only if they find or build up a Presidential candidate who is so popular that even the Liberals will vote for him, and that such a candidate is not now apparent. He feels that while a change might be brought about by a coup, the current preponderance of the National Liberals in the local populace as well as in the National Guard means that a Conservative coup would have little chance of success. In summation, he feels that the Conservatives are weak and will continue to be so because they have no real leader, no organization and no platform for change with popular appeal.

Some members of the old Conservative group quietly started a serious campaign to enlarge the basis of popular support for the Party and to attract a large

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number of people who are in the laboring class or who may be merely less well off. Various devices are being used for this purpose and the scale of operation is not yet large enough to be of any great significance. As reported in Embassy Despatch 246, November 30, 1956, the present officers of the old Conservative Party are now much younger than at any time heretofore. Similarly, the leaders of the Nicaraguan Conservative Party are relatively young and are aware of the need of the Party to develop satisfactory programs to appeal to the mass of the people.

Capabilities of the Nicaraguan Conservative Party. While the new Conservative Party has some able leaders and may have attained a certain stature, if it has received enough votes to continue as a legal party, it will be seriously handicapped if it is not successful in amalgamating on some basis with the old Conservative Party members. We believe this is one of the objectives. The two Conservative Party groups, if they are amalgamated, do have enough Party leaders of national stature to lead the country but what they lack and have lacked for some years is any wide popular support. One officer comments that wide political support in Nicaragua is rather intangible and transitory. Also, the two Conservative groups have not had any agreed positive program. It seems clear now that the leaders of both groups realize this and are taking steps calculated to rectify this situation. If they are successful, the Conservative Party may emerge as an effective political party capable of successfully challenging the National Liberal Party control of the country.

The new Nicaraguan Conservative Party has little or no influence with the National Guard. Moreover, the old Conservative Party has only limited influence there. Individual members of both parties do have certain individual Guard officers with whom they can deal or to whom they can talk. However, there is no general acceptance of the Party by the Guard. When the Conservative Party groups can develop in the Guard, the necessary support or alternatively a truly objective and non-political attitude on the part of the Guard is not clear at the present time. In a large measure it will depend on developments during the next year. Specifically it depends on the composition and attitude of the Guard after installation of the new high-ranking officers scheduled to take place and, secondly, on the extent to which the Conservative Parties are successful in creating a wide basis of support from the mass of the Nicaraguan voters.

#### SUMMATION

In summary, we view the present political situation in Nicaragua as one of flux involving several new and major trends. We do not foresee any early basic changes or any serious challenge to the present set-up for at least several months. The nature and significance of the trends cannot be evaluated properly at this time. The meaning may become clear during the next 6 months after the President makes his proposed Cabinet changes, the Congress begins its sessions and the promotions in the National Guard have been made.

One officer feels that the challenge when it comes will be at the polls in 1963 and by appeal to the voters. Another feels that no successful challenge

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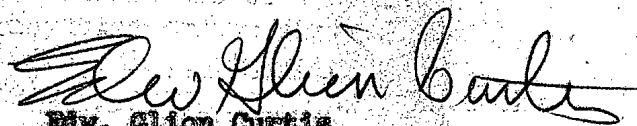
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is possible before some 12 years or more. The third feels that a successful, peaceful challenge is questionable and that violence is possible at some future date.



Edw. Glion Curtis  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

The first of these is the National Guard, which is the mainstay of the regime. It is a highly trained and equipped force, and its loyalty is crucial to the survival of the government. The second is the army, which is also well trained and equipped, but its loyalty is more uncertain. The third is the police, which is responsible for maintaining order and suppressing dissent. The fourth is the judiciary, which is supposed to be independent, but in reality it is closely tied to the executive branch. The fifth is the media, which is controlled by the government and used to spread propaganda. The sixth is the economy, which is in a state of stagnation and is the source of much discontent. The seventh is the population, which is divided into various social and ethnic groups, some of which are more loyal to the regime than others. The eighth is the international community, which is largely indifferent to the situation in Nicaragua. The ninth is the United States, which is the main source of support for the regime. The tenth is the Soviet Union, which is the main source of support for the opposition. The eleventh is the Central American countries, which are all involved in the conflict. The twelfth is the Caribbean Sea, which is a strategic area of interest for both the United States and the Soviet Union. The thirteenth is the Atlantic Ocean, which is the main route for trade and communication. The fourteenth is the Pacific Ocean, which is also a strategic area of interest. The fifteenth is the rest of the world, which is the ultimate audience for the conflict.

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was called in 1983 and the following year, 1984, and by 1985 the situation was even more dire.

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